

# **What happened to the legacy from London 2012? A sociological analysis of the processes involved in preparing for a grassroots sporting legacy from London 2012 outside of the host city**

**EMILY LOVETT<sup>a</sup> & DANIEL BLOYCE<sup>b</sup>**

**<sup>a</sup>Sport and Physical Activity, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, England**

**<sup>b</sup>Sport and Exercise Sciences, University of Chester, Chester, England**

Corresponding author email: Lovette@edgehill.ac.uk

## **What happened to the legacy from London 2012? A sociological analysis of the processes involved in preparing for a grassroots sporting legacy from London 2012 outside of the host city**

### **Abstract**

Preparations for London 2012 included promises for a sporting legacy across Britain. APS data suggest that, despite a slight spike in 2012, we have not experienced the rise in participation promised. The importance of preparations for legacy were well documented but little research has examined these processes. We examine planning for sporting legacy within a non-Olympic city in England, Birmingham. 37 semi-structured interviews were conducted with people delivering sport in Birmingham to provide a figurational analysis of relationships involved. The change in government during the economic recession saw budget cuts and a reduction in sport development personnel. Whilst various organisations struggled financially, others wanted to link to legacy. This increase in groups involved led to confusion and the unintended outcome of ‘initiativitis’. In trying to leverage legacy, a strategic approach to managing potential opportunities with clear communication of opportunities is vital. A belief in inherent inspiration cannot be relied upon.

**Key words:** *London 2012, sport legacy, figurational sociology, Birmingham, initiativitis, school sports partnerships, policy, inherent inspiration, demonstration effect*

### **Introduction**

The claimed legacies associated with mega-events have featured prominently in recent academic literature. Whilst such a concept has existed since the start of the modern Olympic Games, the use of the term ‘legacy’ first featured in the Melbourne 1956 Olympic bid (Leopkey & Parent, 2012). Girginov and Hills (2009) highlighted that the focus on legacy

developed alongside the growing scale of hosting the Games. At the same time, some within the International Olympic Committee (IOC) were concerned about the perception that the size of the Olympics was impacting negatively on the environment. Producing a positive legacy from the Games therefore became increasingly important in order to compensate for these perceived negative impacts (Girginov & Hills, 2009). Legacy has become a significant concept for the IOC since the 1980s and it is now a requirement to include legacy in any host city bid documents (Leopkey & Parent, 2012). Amongst other legacies, a sporting legacy from London 2012 was promised at the bidding and planning stages, with the DCMS (2008) setting a target of increasing the number of regular adult participants in sport by 2 million by 2012 and getting 50% of the nation active by 2020. However, it must be noted that the 2010 Coalition Government dropped the targets relating to increasing sports participation but retained a commitment to delivering a sporting legacy.

The importance of strategic planning prior to a mega-event is widely recognised (Coalter, 2004; Weed et al., 2009). In this respect, planning for 'legacy' from London 2012 provides us with an interesting case study as a range of positive legacies were promised during the bidding and planning stages. Specifically, legacy promises related to developing sporting participation were to encompass areas beyond the host city, London. Very little academic work has been published on the policy process related to such legacy proposals, especially outside of a host venue. Within this paper, therefore, we examine the experience of people involved in delivering and managing sport in Birmingham. This is one of the most populated cities in the United Kingdom (UK), with a population of '1,085,400, (based on the 2012 mid-year population estimate)' (birmingham.gov.uk, 2014), approximately 100 miles north of London, in a region known as the 'West Midlands'. In addition, there were no 2012 Olympic competitions in Birmingham, so it can be appropriately regarded as a non-host city. The

purpose of this paper is to examine in greater detail the processes involved in trying to deliver a sporting legacy. We investigate legacy planning and delivery within this particular case study in attempting to explain why we have not seen the rise in participation promised at the outset.

Examining the preparations for a sporting legacy through this case study will enable us to understand the processes involved at the local level in trying to leverage any impact from London 2012. This paper, therefore, examines the relationships of those involved in preparing to deliver and manage a legacy for grassroots sporting participation in Birmingham before the Games were held. Following a brief review of the key literature, details of the theoretical approach underpinning this study are provided. We then outline the methods employed, before discussing our findings.

## **Literature review**

### ***Past events and participation legacies***

Academics have analysed the influence of previous mega-events on participation. In a systematic review of the likely evidence for developing a physical activity and health legacy from London 2012, Weed et al. (2009) highlighted that there is limited proof regarding the impact of mega-events on grassroots participation. Veal, Toohey and Frawley (2012) speculated that there could have been a slight increase in participation from the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games but as participation data was inconsistent, this was difficult to confirm. Later, they found no evidence that the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games boosted adult participation but they did note a possible positive effect on children's participation levels

(Veal et al., 2012). After financial investment from the Qingdao Municipal Government into outdoor fitness centres and paths, Wang and Theodoraki (2007) found an increase in participation before the 2008 Beijing Games in Qingdao, which was the host city for the Olympic sailing regatta. They highlighted the importance of developing the sporting infrastructure before a mega-event in order to develop participation. Indeed Kidd (2013) stressed the importance of the role of governments, National Olympic Committees and non-governmental organisations in developing quality opportunities for sport at the community level. Similarly, Frawley and Cush (2011) found that the resources provided by the Australian Rugby Union for school and community based programmes to promote the sport in the build-up to the 2003 Rugby World Cup were significant in contributing to increases in participation in rugby, particularly among younger people. Weed et al. (2009, p.9) also found that supplemental activities to leverage the main event were important as there was no automatic or 'inherent' link between watching elite sport and changes in community participation. Upon examining the key literature of past events, it is clear that there is mixed evidence of an increase in participation associated with hosting a mega-event. Further to this, any changes in participation could be attributed to a range of factors alongside the actual hosting of the event, which all indicates that rarely has an increase in participation followed as a matter of course. We now turn to an examination of the literature relating specifically to the London 2012 Games.

### ***London 2012 and a participation legacy***

In the London bid to host the 2012 Games, it was stated that 'mounting excitement in the seven years leading up to the Games in London will inspire a new generation of youth to greater sporting activity' (London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic

Games [LOCOG], 2004, p.19). Bid promises continued into the planning stages for London 2012. As well as young people, there was an ambition to improve mass participation for all, with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (2008, p.18) stating that ‘Our promise is ... to make the UK a world-leading sporting nation. This means ... more people of all ages playing more sport and being more physically active than ever before.’ Girginov and Hills (2009, p.163) claimed that this ‘will be the first time that Games and legacy planning has worked hand in hand’, which is why they consider that London 2012 presented an opportunity for research in addition to the existing publications on mega-events and sports participation.

There is a small but growing body of literature analysing the preparations for a grassroots sporting legacy from London 2012. Girginov and Hills (2008), writing 4 years before the event, argued that the 2012 Games provided an opportunity to develop participation but this would require the UK Government placing sports development legacy on their agenda and focussing efforts and funding towards achieving a grassroots sporting legacy. This was something that they argued was yet to have happened at the time they were writing. Girginov and Hills (2009) also stated that the global economic downturn at that time meant that planning a sustainable sports development legacy was challenged further. In December 2010, the government legacy plan, Places People Play ([archive.sportengland.org](http://archive.sportengland.org)), was published promising investment in facilities, playing fields and developing sports leaders. However, even with some level of investment, Weed (2012) remained critical of the reliance of this approach on individual people choosing to take up sport in order to leverage a participation legacy. He argued that it is important to recognise a gap between the supply of sporting opportunities and a lack of work towards increasing the demand for such opportunities (Weed, 2012). Kohe and Bowen-Jones (2015) have also noted an expectation regarding

inspiration and highlight that whilst the Olympic Games may influence young people's feelings about sport or physical activity, this does not necessarily produce sustained changes in attitude or participation. In relation to this, several authors have questioned the idea of a demonstration effect; the notion that people watching elite sport will become inspired to participate themselves, when it can sometimes have the opposite effect and actually put people off due to their inability to emulate the elite performers (Coalter, 2004, 2007; Veal et al., 2012; Weed et al., 2009). Others suggest establishing a clear sports development strategy is required if trying to increase participation from mega-events (Bullogh, 2012; Coalter, 2004, 2007; Shipway, 2007). For Mackintosh et al. (2015), a focus on families in project design may be beneficial in overcoming some traditional barriers to participation. However, Bloyce and Lovett (2012) highlighted that no discernible national guidance for participation legacy was available until the end of 2010 but the notion of inherent inspiration was a clear feature of such policy. People working at the local level therefore had little over a year to develop their strategies.

Some authors (Bloyce & Lovett, 2012; Girginov & Hills, 2008) have examined processes involved in preparations for a participation legacy at a national, policy level. Others have examined the local delivery of particular projects. Chen and Henry (2016) analysed an individual programme in Leicestershire using realist evaluation. Chen and Henry (2016) highlighted that simple participation outcome data alone cannot be used to provide a full explanation of programme outcomes. Bell and Gallimore (2015) investigated strategic partnerships in Cheshire in attempting to explain leverage from 2012 but found that organisational change and some level of instability within partnerships hindered their ability to leverage the Games. Understanding partnerships at the local level is key to understanding policy implementation. Through two case studies of local authority perspectives of

community sport policy processes, Harris and Houlihan (2014) found examples of fragmentation of power at the local level with some interaction between partners being predominantly competitive alongside other examples of cooperation. Houlihan and Lindsey (2008) suggested that whilst competition is normal in partnership working, it can be detrimental if this leads to conflict. It is important to research the experiences of people and partnerships at the local level in sport before the Games in order to understand, more adequately, preparations to deliver a participation legacy on the ground, so to speak. This is especially important given the high level of importance that those writing in this area give to legacy preparations during the lead up to a mega-event (Coalter, 2004; Shipway, 2007; Wang & Theodoraki, 2007; Weed et al., 2009; Frawley & Cush, 2011). It is vital to bridge the gap between the macro studies of national data and micro approaches to investigating specific programmes or partnerships. Figurational sociology is a synthesising theory which advocates bringing together elements of macro and micro sociological approaches. A figurational approach to research would therefore look to bridge the gap between national studies and investigations of local programmes. The research detailed here provided the opportunity for respondents to reflect on the processes that they were a part of in the lead up to 2012, the influence of national guidance and the reality of implementing that in the local context. The research question at the centre of this paper, therefore, is: what were the key factors at the local level in planning for and managing a sport participation legacy when preparing to host a sport mega-event? Before we begin to examine this, however, we provide a very brief overview of the theoretical perspective.

### **Figurational sociology**

The theoretical perspective of figurational sociology is drawn upon to help us to develop a greater understanding of the relationships and partnerships involved in planning for a grassroots legacy in Birmingham. Whilst figurational sociology has been more traditionally applied to examinations of football hooliganism (Dunning, Murphy & Williams, 1988), globalization (Maguire, 1999; Bloyce, 1997), PE (Green, 2008), and the emergence and development of sport (Dunning and Sheard, 2005), it has also recently been increasingly used in policy. Houlihan, Bloyce and Smith (2009) highlight that this theory is being used increasingly in policy analysis both within sport (Bloyce et al., 2008; Bloyce & Smith, 2010; Waddington & Smith, 2009); Williams, Dunning & Murphy, 1984) and other policy contexts such as health (Dopson & Waddington 1996; Powell, Thurston & Bloyce, 2014). Figurational sociology is derived from the work of Norbert Elias, with a focus on understanding interdependence. It is important to note here that for figurational sociologists, human beings are interdependent and shaped by the figurations that they form; these figurations are continually in flux (Goudsblom, 1977). Those involved in sport in Birmingham do not work in isolation; they are interdependent and are working within the relational constraints of those within and outside of their organisations. For Goudsblom and Mennell (1998), figurations have their own dynamics that cannot be reduced entirely to, but are impacted upon by, individual intentions and motive. Fluctuations within figurations occur due to the complexities of social relations and the constantly changing power ratios within and between the people involved. Elias (1978) viewed power as an element of interdependency ties rather than as a separate 'force' over people. Further to this, 'the long term developments taking place in human social figurations have been and continue to be largely unplanned and unforeseen' (Goudsblom, 1977, p.6). This refers to the fact that the intended actions of human beings often result in outcomes that were unplanned, unintended and unforeseen. Unintended outcomes often result from the complexity of social figurations, which prevents complete



understanding, no matter how powerful an individual may be, of figurations within which any one individual exists.

In considering figuration sociology and policy processes, Bloyce and Smith (2010, p.4) have noted that the approach indicates how 'policy processes and their outcomes can be seen as an expression of unequal power relations and differential relational constraints between groups of people whose interests and perceptions are likely to diverge'. Thus, figurations are central to sports development and the delivery of legacy at the local level.

## **Methods**

The research design adopted for the present research was a case study approach. Case studies enable the in-depth investigation of contemporary phenomena within a real-world context (Yin, 2014). This research design is a common approach in this area and lends itself particularly well to a figuration analysis as it can provide a detailed insight into the complex network of people and their perceptions that influence sport policy and development. 37 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of people involved in delivering and managing sport in Birmingham. Through the use of interviews it was possible to gain a 'we' perspective about the figurations and their processes from the interviewees and they enabled us to develop a relatively detached 'they' perspective (Bloyce, 2004; Maguire, 1988). Purposive and snowball sampling were used to select interviewees on the basis of their position in Sport England, West Midlands for 2012, the City Council, the County Sports Partnership (CSP), National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and clubs of Olympic and non-Olympic sports (see Table 1). Sports included in the research were selected through purposive

sampling to ensure a mix of Olympic and non-Olympic sports, individual and team sports and priority and non-priority sports for Birmingham. Interviewees were selected in order to gain an insight into the work of the people and organisations considered key to the delivery of sports participation and the implementation and management of national policies and strategies at the local level. As such, City Council interviewees were selected based on their role, in the first instance the Head of Sport and the Legacy Development Manager, and snowball sampling was used from there to approach other sport specific or community development personnel. Access was gained to all CSP employees. Purposive sampling of personnel working or volunteering within sport in Birmingham was used to gain representation from the selected sports. Access to clubs was limited. In the first instance searches through club directories and google were used to find clubs with published contact details from the selected sports. Club secretaries or chairpersons at the identified clubs who were willing to take part were interviewed. This was limited to one or two clubs per sport due to a limited response rate. Finally, managers from private gyms and local leisure centres were interviewed in order to gain an understanding of participation beyond the traditional sports club setting. Similar searches as for sports clubs were carried out with gyms and leisure centres and again, those who responded and were willing to take part were interviewed.

Table 1. Research participants and pseudonyms

[Table 1 here]

Ethical approval was gained before semi-structured interviews were conducted between February and July 2012. Interviewees were made aware that due to the nature of their role

they may be identifiable and they all provided their consent on this basis. All interviewees were given pseudonyms in order to at least try and protect their anonymity (see Table 1). Interviews focused on interviewees' experiences during the pre-Games period and their expectations for a participation legacy in Birmingham. The interview topic guide took the following format: initial biographical information, expectations for legacy, legacy plans, partnerships, and, the influence of London 2012 on the work of those delivering sport. Initial biographical information about their role was sought before gaining an insight into the respondents' expectations for legacy. Interviewees were also invited to discuss any legacy plans or policy that they were aware of. For Elias (1978), it is important to study people within the context of the figurations that they form with each other, interviewees were therefore asked to discuss their relationships with others involved in sport at the local level and any partnerships that they were a part of. Finally, respondents were asked about their perceptions of the impact of London 2012 on their work and organisation. It is important to note that whilst a person's individual views may be formed through early socialisation and form their habitus, 'in more complex societies [the social habitus] has many layers' (Elias, 1991, p.183). Indeed, when writing about the habitus of SDOs, Bloyce and Green (2011, p.481) have highlighted that 'although habitus is formed in early life, it remains susceptible to development as networks of relationships become ever more complex and compelling, especially in and around the world of work'. Therefore, whilst some questions were directed towards information gathering about the work of the organisation and related legacy policy, and others required respondents to share their views on this and the impact of 2012, it was recognised that these will often have been considered by the interviewee, to some extent, as the same thing.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and transcripts checked for accuracy. Thematic analysis was conducted and emergent themes were coded using MAXQDA 10, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) package. Kvale (2007) highlighted a range of interview analysis techniques but also highlighted the role of the researcher in this process. For Kvale (2007), it is possible to analyse interviews through theoretical reflection as this can lead to new knowledge. For figurational sociologists there is a two-way traffic, or ongoing relationship, between theory and research ‘in which both are refined by one another’ (Bloyce, 2004, p.153). Rather than selecting a deductive or inductive approach, it is recognised that these two go hand in hand, there is a constant and dynamic interplay between theory and research. In this particular case, interviews were coded and re-coded with conceptual themes in mind. Knowledge of figurational sociology and relevant concepts informed some coding. Other codes were created based on factors emerging from interviews. Codes were later organised into broader themes and analysed with a theoretically informed mind.

### ***The sporting figuration in Birmingham***

Before discussing the results, some contextual information about Birmingham is necessary. As previously stated, Birmingham is one of the most populated cities in the UK. Specifically, there is a high youth population; ‘45.7% of Birmingham residents are under 30, compared with 36.8% for England’ (Birmingham.gov.uk, 2014). The city is also very diverse with 22% of residents ‘born outside the UK, compared with 14% in England and 11% in the West Midlands region’ (Birmingham.gov.uk, 2014). In England, responsibility for local services, such as education, transport and refuse collection, lies with the local authorities (LAs). There are, however, several different structures of local government. In Birmingham, there is one

main LA for the city, which is divided into 10 districts. For sport in Birmingham, there is an overarching city council Sport and Events Department. The city had previously made an unsuccessful bid to host the 1992 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and hosting events is one of city council's priorities for sport. The part of this department most responsible for local sport provision is the Community Sport and Healthy Lifestyles team. Further to this, each of the 10 districts have their own committees with responsibility for managing local services, including sport. However, in the UK sport remains a non-statutory service, meaning that local authorities are not required by law to fund and organise sport. Sport England is the national organisation responsible for grassroots sport; it is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the central government department responsible for sport, the DCMS. Sport England part fund CSPs to support NGBs of sport to deliver their Whole Sport Plans<sup>1</sup> at the local level. In Birmingham at the time of this research, this was the Birmingham Sport and Physical Activity Partnership (BSPAP).

As well as understanding the local context, one also needs to appreciate that during the period before the Olympic Games several changes impacted upon national legacy policy. Having won the right to host the 2012 Olympics in July 2005, of particular significance was the period of economic recession after the global economic downturn in 2008 and the change in national Government in 2010. The Coalition Government set out a Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) with the apparent aim of reducing debt and prioritising spending. 'Funding to local authorities' was to be 'reduced by 28% from 2011 to 2015 after taking account of inflation' and this meant that from 2010/11 to 2012/13 the Government 'reduced its grants to Birmingham City Council by over £140 million. That is a reduction of 14%' (Birmingham

---

<sup>1</sup> Whole Sport Plans are plans set out by NGBs and submitted to Sport England in order to qualify for public funding. Currently NGBs are required to produce them every 4 years.

City Council, 2013, p.2). Academics were critical of funds being diverted from grassroots sport before the CSR (Girginov & Hills, 2008; Kenyon & Palmer, 2008). It was outlined in the CSR that DCMS funding would reduce from £1.4 billion in 2010/11 to £1.1 billion by 2014/15 (HM Treasury, 2010, p.11). It is in the light of such developments, locally and nationally, that the discussion of our results need to be considered.

## **Findings**

Most interviewees held assumptions about the inherent inspiration from London 2012.

Aspirations for legacy were very much centred on the idea that members of the public would be inspired to participate in more sport if they watched the Olympic and Paralympic Games and those working in sport wanted to be prepared for an influx of people following the Games. However, alongside an assumed demonstration effect, interviewees recognised the need to attempt to proactively leverage legacy to some extent but discussed the reality of constraints that they experienced following the CSR as key factors impacting on the development of a sport participation legacy. Whilst interviewees discussed a reduction in personnel employed centrally to deliver sport following the CSR, another key factor highlighted was the increased interest of community groups and the private sector in delivering Olympic themed activity. This served to lengthen the chains of interdependency for those involved in sport in the city and attempting to manage legacy. The increased interest from various groups wanting to deliver something Olympic themed led participants to discuss issues of initiatives that was a related unintended outcome of the increasing complexity of the network.

The findings presented here help us to make sense of participation data that has since come to light. The Active People Survey (APS) is a survey of population levels of participation in sport (Rowe, 2009) that started in 2006 and has been conducted by Sport England annually since. The data enabled us to track participation over time by local authority. For Birmingham, participation in sport at least once a week showed a slight spike in 2012, followed by a dip in participation and slight rise again in APS 9 (2014/15). ([activepeople.sportengland.org](http://activepeople.sportengland.org)). Figures for Manchester (another large, non-host, city in England), London East (the host Borough) and England demonstrate a similar, but less exaggerated pattern which all saw relatively steady participation rates. Figure 1 shows participation rates in sport at least once per week for Birmingham, Manchester, London East and England. Any changes in participation from 2005 to 2015 were minimal both nationally, and more particularly in Birmingham. This data provides us with a basic, descriptive outcome for Olympic legacy promotion. On this basis, it might be argued that there has been limited success in producing a legacy of increased participation. This is also an issue more recently highlighted in the media with headlines such as ‘Olympic legacy failure: inspiring London 2012 message has become a millstone’ ([www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com), 2015) and the BBC reporting ‘increasing concerns that Britain is failing to live up to the legacy promise of the London 2012 Olympics’ ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 2015)

[Figure 1 here]

Figure 1. APS data for participation in sport at least once per week for Birmingham, Manchester, London East and Manchester.

## **Analysis**

In this section, the figurations and the impact of individuals and their networks on legacy preparations are analysed. Figurational sociology is used to make sense of the myriad constraints on legacy preparations at the local level. There was clearly a co-occurrence of several social processes that were interweaving and resulted in the outcomes evident through APS data. The analysis below sheds light on some potential reasons why there is little evidence that a sporting participation legacy has emerged, or is ever likely to, from London 2012.

### ***Belief in inherent legacy***

A belief in an inherent inspiration amongst most participants emerged as a key theme. Whilst Weed et al. (2009) found that there is no automatic or inherent link between watching elite sport and changes in community participation, the notion of inherent inspiration remained a key aspect of Olympic discourse throughout national legacy documents (Bloyce & Lovett, 2012). Inherent legacy was clearly the implicit model from government and such positive assumptions were also evident in the discussions held with our participants. A belief in this notion was evident at the local level through the city council's focus on winning the bid to host the pre-Games training camps for the American and Jamaican track and field teams, with the Legacy Development Manager stating that 'the two training camps are there to inspire people' (BCC A). BSPAP E agreed, stating that: 'I think Birmingham will benefit from having the American and Jamaican athletes here because that will ... inspire a lot of people ... to get involved in some way, shape or form'. The high level of involvement of those working in sport meant that the idea of inherent inspiration was believed in and reiterated throughout many of the interviews. For example, NGB Swimming discussed her view of legacy, stating that: 'it's the effect that the Olympics has on subsequent people in subsequent years ... motivating people to get involved and inspiring children to want to have a go'. However, for Weed (2009), if anything, the demonstration effect will only influence previous participants



whose participation has lapsed, infrequent participants to participate more, or participants to switch sports; it is unlikely to get traditional non-participants to take up sport. Even then, Weed (2009) argues that any demonstration effect needs to be proactively leveraged to be successful. It is important to note here the difference between legacy and leverage. Whilst various impacts experienced may be considered as a legacy from an event, impact tells us nothing about how these outcomes came about. For Chalip (2006), leveraging involves strategies implemented to achieve those impacts. Despite the need to leverage being highlighted in the academic literature, our participants frequently cited what they considered to be the benefits of sport and the idea of inherent inspiration. We argue that the habitus of our participants' was such that this view had become almost second nature to some. Elias (1991) argues that such collective fantasies serve to protect people from a full awareness of situations that they are powerless to control. In this case, inherent inspiration was being presented as a realistic idea in order to regain control over initial legacy promises and rhetoric that very few were in a position to deliver. Interviewees frequently expressed the belief that an inherent inspiration would emanate from the Games. However, they also highlighted challenges that they faced, particularly with regard to some of the broader issues emerging after a change in government, which we discuss next.

### ***Constraints that followed the Comprehensive Spending Review***

The development and delivery of participation legacy planning cannot be viewed in isolation. For figurational sociologists it is vital to consider the broader context within which people work. In this section the factors that impacted on sport and legacy planning after a change in government are considered, specifically the CSR and the subsequent constraints felt at the local level as a result of funding cuts. Elias (1978) discusses the varying power differentials

between interdependent people within and between groups. The actions of individuals and groups within the figuration constrain, to varying degrees, the actions of others. In this case, the power differentials also vary between people working at different levels, governments and other interest groups do not have complete control and are therefore unable to coordinate things as effectively as they would like. Here, we set out some of the constraints felt by those at the local level that resulted from their interdependence with government, or rather their relative dependence on government funding and economic stability.

In 2009, Girginov and Hills highlighted that the global economic recession that was occurring alongside an increasing Games budget was likely to hinder legacy work. The subsequent response of the new Coalition government the following year impacted upon sports provision further. In this respect, financial constraints were a significant issue for our interviewees. SE Strategic Lead WM stated:

the comprehensive spending review was massive. You know and the cuts that we've had in local authority spending. So Birmingham had a big sports [development] team of its own that has gradually diminished quite significantly.

This was a process occurring alongside the desire to develop an Olympic legacy. Indeed BCC Head of Sport stated that sport:

was taking hit after hit financially. And this [LA Sport and Healthy Lifestyles] is a very different team, it's much smaller than it was... that's got nothing to do with the Olympics I would argue. And much more to do with the prioritisation [due to budget cuts] that's had to go on.

As the City Council have had less money available to them due to their relative dependence on government funds, they have had to prioritise their spending, which resulted in staffing reductions. This is a broader unplanned development that happened alongside legacy preparations. The two objectives, saving money and delivering a legacy, may well serve to undermine one another. From a figural perspective, Bloyce and Smith (2010) have highlighted that unintended outcomes are likely to result from the complex and overlapping objectives that those working in sport are trying to achieve. The co-occurrence of a recession and hosting London 2012 with accompanying legacy expectations could be considered sufficient environmental disturbance(s) to prompt organisational change. However, during the pre-Games period, interview participants did not perceive that they were working towards a new, and certainly not a more desirable position from which to better match their environment. Participants were in a state of flux, which, for figural sociologists, is normal, our social figurations are in constant flux. At this stage, our participants were required to manage tensions between the competing objectives of managing budget cuts and delivering a sporting legacy with some scope to make decisions about how to go about their work within their relational constraints. In discussing the impacts of the recession and budget cuts at the local level, BCC Head of Sport stated:

I think that's why the response to the Olympics has been to kind of, to try and promote opportunities and coordinate them, rather than be specific around setting targets and delivering them. We haven't got the capacity to do that.

The 'lower level players' are arguably more constrained by the actions of the 'upper level players' and their control over financial resources, a significant source of power (Elias, 1978). BCC were constrained to take this approach due to their relatively limited access to resources that would enable them to deliver more. Therefore it appears that although Weed et al. (2009) highlighted that there is no inherent link between watching elite sport and increased

community participation, people at the local level may have, in part, relied upon the idea of inherent inspiration for pragmatic reasons; the financial and human resources were not available for proactively leveraging legacy in other ways.

Alongside a decrease in the capacity of the city council, interviewees from the CSP recognised that some community groups were struggling financially and were, therefore, unable to provide as many sporting opportunities. BSPAP E observed that:

I've definitely seen people that have probably done less sport because of cost, I think there's also ... a number of charities and community groups that are really, you know, they've either folded or they're really, really finding it tough.

In social figurations, the dynamics of a group can change relatively quickly (Elias, 1991), as observed above in relation to the city council workforce. Further to this, interviewees also specifically mentioned changes to their figuration through the loss of School Sport Partnerships (SSPs) as a key factor that impacted on legacy development. SSPs were partnerships that aimed to develop the quantity and quality of PE in schools; they included a Partnership Development Manager and Coordinators or Link Teachers in each school. Phillpots (2012, p.16) highlighted that the reliance of SSPs on Treasury and lottery funding 'meant that they were particularly vulnerable to changing government ideologies'. Indeed, funding for these partnerships was removed by the Coalition Government, which was a challenge for our interviewees. For example, NGB Athletics Network stated that:

I think perhaps the biggest challenge was all the changes that have happened around school sport, because the school sport partnerships initiative got stopped and what we

find with networking is that you had somebody that you'd got a relationship with who you knew and then it all changes ... then you are having to re-establish relationships and try and find new people.

In relation to this, BSPAP A highlighted that since SSPs were removed 'we get a lot more enquiries from people saying I want to work with schools and I don't know how to do it.' It is clear that lines of communication were affected when SSPs ceased to exist. The people who remain within the figuration have had to develop new relationships which will inevitably alter the power relations within the figuration further. During a period when people may have expected to be part of sustainable partnerships for delivering a sporting legacy at the local level, there were myriad constraints. Whilst Harris and Houlihan (2014) identified competition for scarce resources as a relatively normal aspect of partnership working at the local level in sport, it seems that this was exacerbated by the economic environment. By using Elias's explanations of interdependence and power, we can see that changing relationships and relational constraints are a normal part of interweaving social figurations.

### ***Lengthening chains of interdependence***

In considering the complexity of the networks of relations involved in sport in Birmingham, it is important to recognise the processual nature of social relationships. Alongside the impact of financial constraints, the network of relations was also growing, largely due to the unquestioning belief in inherent legacy held by those involved in sport and those who wanted to be involved. In this respect, many interviewees discussed new links that they had made with private companies for investment as well as with community groups who were interested in being involved in 'something Olympic themed' (BSPAP A). New links with different community groups were formed with the CSP in advance of the Games, as a direct

consequence of their impending arrival, serving to lengthen chains of interdependency.

BSPAP A stated:

I've been approached by [a] number of community groups and organisations who, because it's the Olympic year they are doing something Olympic themed ... People seem to be focusing on sport.

Further links with some community groups were directly attributed to the Olympics by some interviewees from the CSP. For example, when asked how 'London 2012 has impacted on your day to day work?', BSPAP C responded:

I have more interest in the funding stream because more community deliverers and providers want to get involved with mass participation.

Increased interest in making links with sport was also recognised with regard to private investment, BSPAP F stated:

a lot of the private sector are seeing the benefits of linking up with sport organisations and sports and sporting bodies in general to help market themselves and promote themselves in a positive light.

Interest from private companies was also recognised by interviewees from sports clubs, for example, Club Swimming stated: 'there definitely seems to be more grants around and certainly from the bigger companies like Tesco's, they seem to be putting money into sport at the moment'. It is clear that there was an increased interest in sport from community groups and private companies, related to a belief in a positive, inherent effect from the Games. As highlighted above, this had been assumed but this may have stemmed from the habitus (Elias, 1978) of those involved. Despite the increased interest among non-sport groups, APS data suggests that this did not have a long-term impact on participation.

For Elias (1978, p.85), when more and more people become involved in a figuration, individuals find the situations that they are in 'increasingly opaque and uncontrollable' and they become increasingly aware of their inability to understand or control it. The increased interest in sport served to widen the network of relations and lengthen the chains of interdependency for those delivering sport, seemingly, as a result of the widespread ideology surrounding the forthcoming Olympics. 'The interweaving of the needs and intensions of many people subjects each individual among them to compulsions that none of them has intended' (Elias, 1991, p.62). In this case, the confusion that stemmed from the increasing interest in Olympic themed activity is an unintended outcome, the impact of which we discuss next.

### ***Unintended outcomes – initiativitis and confusion***

The increased interest in sport in the lead up to the Games led to the unintended outcome of initiativitis. Initiativitis refers to the proliferation of policy statements, programmes and initiatives offered, as well as the re-packaging of existing programmes and funding (Hunter, 2003; Punter 2010). Changes to the network of relations and initiativitis at the local level meant that legacy became increasingly difficult to manage because of the diminished control of the CSP and LA. In this respect, as 'power differentials lessen between interdependent individuals and groups there is a diminishing possibility that any participants, whether on their own or as groups, will be able to influence' the overall development of legacy in the city (Elias, 1978, p.96).

A main focus for the city council during the pre-Games period was bidding for, and subsequently hosting, pre-Games training camps for the American and Jamaican track and field teams as well as organising events associated with the torch relay. The CSP were delivering programmes from the Sport England strategy Places People Play, whilst interview participants from NGBs discussed their new programmes specifically designed to generate participation, which, for example, included 'I'm Basketball' (England Basketball) and 'Run England' (England Athletics). It seems that in this particular case there was some level of fragmentation at the local level. There were countless other sporting and community organisations involved in delivering a range of legacy programmes<sup>2</sup>. The extent to which this activity and the increased interest in sport highlighted above is sustainable is questionable, particularly given what we know, so far, from APS data. A number of these programmes were short-term and the community groups who wanted to be involved in something Olympic themed also had short-term focus. Therefore, although there was increased interest in sport, which contributed to lengthening chains of interdependence, this did not necessarily bring about the desired results of the legacy planning. When Collins and Kay (2014) considered social inclusion schemes in sport, they were critical of the level of initiatives and with this the issues of sustainability. Perhaps the level of initiatives and short-termism may begin to explain the drop-off in participation evident through the APS data after the Olympic year. The short-termism evident may, in part, be due to the widespread belief in inherent inspiration leading to the assumption that people would then continue their participation afterwards of their own accord. London 2012 may well have served as something of a 'focusing event' (Chalip, 1995) for people working at the local level in a similar way to the momentum given to national policymaking (Bloyce & Lovett, 2012).

---

<sup>2</sup> Over 40 programmes or initiatives were described by interview participants from their own organisations alone. Many other programmes were also mentioned that were offered by other organisations that were not included in the research.



The level of initiatives led interviewees to highlight the confusion that this frequently caused for volunteers and members of the public. For example, BSPAP D began to list some of the Olympic related programmes from Places People Play and highlighted the lack of clarity for members of the public:

alongside that there are other projects called Local Leaders, Club Leaders, they are essentially doing the same sort of things as all of those other projects and I think if you are at street level in a club actually as a volunteer, I think it's very confusing to know well do I do a sport, am I a Sport Maker, am I a local leader, am I a club leader? ... Churches have got something called Go for Gold, I think it is, Street Games have got Coca-Cola festivals which are essentially community games but funded by Coca-Cola. So there is [sic] lots of things out there and I think what we have almost got is too much, there is no clarity.

There were so many Olympic related participation initiatives, from a range of different organisations attempting, it would seem, to jump on the 'Olympic bandwagon', on top of the existing provision in the city. Elias (1978, p.144) highlighted that in complex societies, people become 'caught up in ever-lengthening chains of interdependence which for ... [them] constitute functional nexuses beyond ... [their] control'. In this case, from the lengthening chains of interdependence involved in sport in Birmingham and their Olympic themed initiatives, it appears that things became quite bewildering for those involved. Each individual or group clearly intended to create an Olympic link and develop participation. However, their overlapping intentions led to the unplanned outcome of initiatives, and the sheer number of people involved, according to most interviewees, just made for a very confusing situation within the city. Hunter (2003), in relation to public health policy, argued

that commitment to an overall objective is clear from the outpouring of policy statements and programmes available that accompanies such initiatives, but this actually makes joining up policy and management more difficult as many of the people responsible for the initiatives actually tend to operate, relatively speaking, in isolation.

There was a large degree of initiatives in the lead up to the Games at the national level (Bloyce & Lovett, 2012) and this was seemingly exacerbated at the local level when another raft of initiatives were included from a range of organisations. The constant interweaving of individual actions gives rise to something that has not been planned by any one individual or group (Elias, 1991); in this case, that is a state of confusion surrounding legacy related programmes and initiatives. For Elias (1991, p.62), people often ‘stand before the outcome of their own actions’ and look ‘with astonishment at the convolutions and formations of the historical flow which they themselves constitute but do not control’. It is clear from the interviews that not only was it difficult for any individual or group to control legacy preparations in Birmingham, but it would also be incredibly difficult for any individual to even be aware of all the work going on towards delivering a legacy. Such initiatives is an unintended outcome of the increasingly complex networks of people interested in ‘Olympic legacy’.

## **Conclusion**

In seeking to understand the apparent lack of a participation legacy from London 2012 through an examination of preparations for legacy delivery within a non-host city, several key issues emerged. Firstly, the processual nature of social relationships must be recognised. In this respect, we argue that figural sociology has helped us to explain the key factors

involved in legacy planning, particularly through our analysis of the interdependent relationships involved. As such, figurational sociology has enabled us to demonstrate the unintended outcomes and constraints from the interweaving of complex social networks as normal. The network of relationships involved in sport in Birmingham was continually in flux in the lead up to the Games. Several changes to the figuration were noted due to financial constraints emerging from the new Coalition government's CSR. The impact of the wider economic environment was an important factor affecting the delivery of sport programmes. Key factors impacting on the development of legacy in this regard were a reduction in personnel employed in sport by the city council and community groups folding or delivering less sport. The loss of SSPs was also considered a constraint as lines of communication between some organisations were lost.

Alongside the constraints following the CSR, another key factor in legacy planning involved new links that were created with community groups and private companies at the local level that wanted to be involved with the Olympics in some capacity. These new links served to widen the network and increase the complexity of the sporting figuration in Birmingham. In turn, we conclude that this increased interest contributed to the unintended outcome of initiatives and added confusion for those delivering legacy strategies. Countless organisations were delivering a range of legacy themed programmes. The network had become so complex that nobody was in a position to understand, or even be aware of, all of the work going on in the city; there was certainly very limited opportunity for any individual or group to be able to exhibit any strategic management over sporting provision at the local level. These issues, coupled with the level of short termism often associated with initiatives, may help to explain the limited lasting change in participation rates evident from the APS data.

For many, having to prioritise spending and working within severe financial constraints conflicted with the expectation of an Olympic legacy being delivered locally. The reliance of, and belief in, the inherent inspiration to participate in sport from the Games was apparent throughout. This ideology was a key factor that influenced the actions of those involved at the local level. To a certain extent, it appeared that a reliance on inherent inspiration was exacerbated by budget cuts and the focus on the assumed impact of hosting training camps in the city. In examining the processes involved in delivering any plans for mega-event legacy, the broader national and international context must be considered. The continually changing environments within which people are working make it near impossible to predict the legacy outcome of a mega-event at the bidding and planning stages. What is clear is that there is a need to proactively leverage events in order to be better placed to exploit potential legacy opportunities into impacts. Whether a sporting legacy is desired or other areas of community benefit including education, culture and sustainability from Rio 2016 and other mega-events, leveraging is required to make the most of the opportunities that may arise. With this in mind, in attempting to leverage an increase in participation from any future major or mega-event it is vital to take a more strategic approach to managing the potential sporting opportunities offered. Clear communication of such potential opportunities among particular target groups is also key.

## References

- Bell, Barbara and Gallimore, K. 2015. "Embracing the games? Leverage and legacy of London 2012 Olympics at the sub-regional level by means of strategic partnerships." *Leisure Studies* 34 (6): 720-741. doi: 10.1080/02614367.2014.994553
- Bloyce, Daniel. 1997. "Just Not Cricket: Baseball in England 1874 – 1900." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 14 (2): 207-218.

- Bloyce, Daniel. 2004. "Research is a messy process: A case study of a figural approach to conventional issues in social science research methods." *Graduate Journal of Social Science* 1 (1): 144-166.
- Bloyce, Daniel. and Ken Green. 2011. "Sports development officers on sports development." In *Routledge handbook of sports development*, edited by B. Houlihan & M. Green, 477-486. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Bloyce, Daniel, and Emily Lovett. 2012. "Planning for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy: a figural analysis." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 4 (3): 361-77. doi: 10.1080/19406940.2012.740063
- Bloyce, Daniel and Andy Smith. 2010. *Sport policy and development: an introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Bloyce, Daniel, Andy Smith, Rebecca Mead and Jenna Morris. 2008. "'Playing the game (plan)': A figural analysis of organizational change in sports development in England." *European Sport Management Quarterly* 8 (4): 359-378.
- Bullogh, Steven. 2012. "A new look at the latent demand for sport and its potential to deliver a positive legacy for London 2012." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 4(1): 39-54. Doi: 10.1080/19406940.2011.627357
- Chalip, Laurence. 1995. "Policy analysis in sport management." *Journal of Sport Management* 9 (1): 1-13.
- Chalip, Laurance. 2006. "Towards Social Leverage of Sports Events." *Journal of Sport & Tourism*. 11 (2): 109-127. Doi: 10.1080/14775080601155126
- Chen, Shushu. And Henry, Ian. 2016. "Evaluating the London 2012 Games' impact on sport participation in a non-hosting region: a practical application of realist evaluation." *Leisure Studies* 35 (5): 685-707. Doi: 10.1080/02614367.2015.1040827
- Coalter, Fred. 2004. "Stuck in the blocks? A sustainable sporting legacy." In *After the gold rush: a sustainable Olympics for London*, edited by Anthony Vigor, Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims, 93-108. London: IPPR and Demos.
- Coalter, Fred. 2007. "London Olympics 2012: 'the catalyst that inspires people to lead more active lives'?" *Perspectives in Public Health* 127 (3): 109-110. doi: 10.1177/1466424007077342
- Collins, Mike and Tess Kay. 2014. *Sport and Social Exclusion* (2nd ed.). Oxon: Routledge.
- Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). 2008. *Before, during and after: making the most of the London 2012 Games*. London: DCMS.

- Dopson, Sue. and Ivan Waddington. 1996. "Managing social change: a process-sociological approach to understanding organisational change within the National Health Service." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 18 (4): 525-550.
- Dunning, Eric, Murphy, Patrick and Williams, John. 1988. *The roots of football hooliganism: an historical and sociological study*. London: Routledge & Keegan Paul.
- Dunning, Eric and Sheard, Kenneth. 2005. *Barbarians, Gentleman and Players: A sociological study of the development of rugby football*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Oxon: Taylor & Francis.
- Elias, Norbert 1978. *What is sociology?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Elias, Norbert. 1991. *The society of individuals*. London: Basil Blackwell.
- Elias, Norbert. 2000. *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Frawley, Stephen and Adam Cush. 2011. "Major sport events and participation legacy: the case of the 2003 Rugby World Cup." *Managing Leisure* 16 (1): 65-76. doi: 10.1080/13606719.2011.532605.
- Girginov, Vassil and Laura Hills. 2008. "A sustainable sports legacy: creating a link between the London Olympics and sports participation." *International Journal of the History of Sport* 25 (14): 2091-2116. doi: 10.1080/09523360802439015.
- Girginov, Vassil and Laura Hills. 2009. "The political process of constructing a sustainable London Olympics sports development legacy." *International Journal of Sport Policy* 1 (2): 161-181. doi: 10.1080/19406940902950713.
- Green, Ken. 2008. *Understanding Physical Education*. London: Sage.
- Goudsblom, Johan. 1977. *Sociology in the balance: A critical essay*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Goudsblom, Johan and Stephen Mennell. 1998. *The Norbert Elias reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Harris, Spencer and Houlihan, Barrie. 2014. Delivery networks and community sport in England. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 27 (2): 113-127. doi: [10.1108/IJPSM-07-2013-0095](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-07-2013-0095)
- HM Treasury. 2010. *Spending Review 2010*. London: Crown Copyright 2010.
- Houlihan, Barrie, Daniel Bloyce and Andy Smith. 2009. "Editorial. Developing the research agenda in sport policy." *International Journal of Sport Policy* 1: 1-12.
- Houlihan, Barrie and Lindsey, Iain. 2008. Networks and Partnerships in Sports Development. In *Management of Sports Development*, edited by Vassil Girginov, 225-241. Oxford, United Kingdom: Elsevier

- Hunter, David. 2003. "Public health policy." In *Public health for the 21st century: New perspectives on policy, participation and practice*, edited by Judy Orme, Jane Powell, Pat Taylor, Tony Harrison & Melanie Grey, 15-41. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Kenyon, James and Clive Palmer. 2008. "Funding and sponsorship; the commercial impact of the 2012 London Olympic Games — some considerations." *Journal of Qualitative Research in Sports Studies* 2 (1): 29-44.
- Kidd, Bruce. 2013. "The global sporting legacy of the Olympic Movement." *Sport in Society* 16 (4): 491-502. doi. 10.1080/17430437.2013.785760
- Kohe, Geoffery and Will Bowen-Jones. 2015. "Rhetoric and realities of London 2012 Olympic education and participation 'legacies': voices from the core and periphery." *Sport, Education and Society*, Advance online publication. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2014.997693.
- Kvale, Steinar. 2007. *Doing interviews*. London, United Kingdom: Sage.
- Leopkey, Becca and Milena Parent. 2012. "Olympic Games legacy: From general benefits to sustainable long-term legacy." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29 (6): 924-943. doi: 10.1080/09523367.2011.623006.
- LOCOG 2004. *London 2012 Candidate File*, London: London 2012. Retrieved from: <http://www.london2012.com/news/publications/candidate-file.php>
- Mackintosh, Chris, Natalie Darko, Zoe Rutherford and Hetty-May Wilkins. 2015. "A qualitative study of the impact of the London 2012 Olympics on families in the East Midlands of England: lessons for sports development policy and practice." *Sport, Education and Society* 20 (8): 1065-1087. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2014.881337.
- Maguire, Joseph. 1988. "Doing figurational sociology: some preliminary observations on methodological issues and sensitizing concepts." *Leisure Studies* 7 (2): 187-193.
- Maguire, Joseph. 1999. *Global Sport: identities, societies, civilizations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Phillpots, Lesley. 2012. "An analysis of the policy process for physical education and school sport: the rise and demise of school sport partnerships." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 5 (2): 193-211. doi: 10.1080/19406940.2012.666558.
- Powell, Katie, Miranda Thurston and Daniel Bloyce. 2014. "Local status and power in area based health improvement partnerships." *Health* 18 (6): 561-579.
- Punter, John, ed. 2010. *Urban Design and the British Urban Renaissance*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Rowe, Nicholas. 2009. "The Active People Survey: a catalyst for transforming evidence based sport policy in England." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*

1 (1): 89-98. doi: [10.1080/19406940802681244](https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940802681244).

Shipway, Richard. 2007. "Sustainable legacies for the 2012 Olympic Games." *The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health* 127 (3): 119-124. doi: 10.1177/1466424007077344.

Sport England. 2016. Active People Interactive. Retrieved from <http://activepeople.sportengland.org/>

Veal, A. J., Kristine Toohey and Stephen Frawley. 2012. "The sport participation legacy of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and other international sporting events hosted in Australia." *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure & Events* 4 (2): 155-184. doi: 10.1080/19407963.2012.662619

Wang, Weiming and Eleni Theodoraki. 2007. "Mass sport policy development in the Olympic City: the case of Qingdao – host to the 2008 sailing regatta." *Perspectives in Public Health* 127 (3): 125–32. doi: 10.1177/1466424007077345.

Waddington, Ivan. and Andy Smith. 2009. *An Introduction to Drugs in Sport: Addicted to Winning?* London: Routledge.

Weed Mike, Esther Coren, Jo Fiore, Louise Mansfield, Ian Wellard, Dikaia Chatziefstathiou and Suzanne Dowse. 2009. *A systematic review of the evidence base for developing a physical activity and health legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games*. London: Department of Health.

Weed, Mike. 2012. "Understanding demand for sport and tourism." *Journal of Sport & Tourism* 17 (1): 1-3. doi:10.1080/14775085.2012.668372.

Williams, John, Eric Dunning and Patrick Murphy. 1984. *Hooligans Abroad: Behaviour and Control of English Fans at Continental Football Matches*. London: Routledge & Paul Keegan Books.

Yin, Robert. 2014. *Case study research: design and methods*. London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications Ltd.